

To find out more about How to Drug Proof Your Kids™ contact Paula Pridham, Community Learning Manager at Care for the Family at paula.pridham@cff.org.uk or call 02920 811 733.

Paula Pridham

How to Drug Proof Your Kids™ - Steering children away from the harmful use of drugs

Ask any parent what they fear the most for their children and sooner or later, the conversation will turn to drugs. This fear factor can permeate the family home, leading to a lack of trust, worry about the influence of friends or endless arguments about acceptable times for their children to come home. Sometimes this fear is realistic, the family may be living in an area where drug and alcohol misuse is part of the daily routine for some young people and adults in the community. For the majority of parents, the fears are born out of ignorance, media hype and the natural desire to protect their child from harm.

Does the How to Drug Proof Your Kids™ (DPYK) programme guarantee that children of parents who attend will never try drugs? No! The aim of DPYK is to educate parents, and other carers, about drugs and give them the information and skills they need to help their children make healthy lifestyle choices. Recent reports showed that most parents would rather leave the job of talking to their children about drugs to schools, yet parents can have a positive influence on the choices their children make - they just need to feel confident enough to do it.

The programme

Over six, two-hour sessions participants:

- become better informed about drugs - why and how they are used and the reality of drug use in their area
- learn how to communicate effectively with their children about drugs
- develop plans to use at home to help their children make informed choices

- examine their own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour about drug use
- benefit from the support of other parents and are encouraged by the fact that they are not alone

The first four sessions focus on prevention, session five on intervention and session six on relapse protection.

One of the key strengths of the programme is that it is delivered by trained, local people. They might be drugs professionals, community workers, police, Surestart etc, but many are volunteers - parents themselves. Because they are local they carry an authority that someone from outside the area just doesn't have, plus they will know what local support and resources are available. Since it began over 3,000 parents have attended the programme across the UK. It is being delivered through schools, community centres, churches and doctors surgeries.

Exeter University¹ was commissioned to conduct the first phase of a long-term evaluation in 2006 and reports that, "Overall, the current evaluation provides strong reasons for believing that Care for the Family's Drug Proof Your Kids course makes a real difference to parents' ability to help their children stay clear of drugs. This raises the challenge of extending the programme to reach more parents, through a range of different avenues, so that more children can benefit from it."

1. Tripp, J. and Evans, D. (2006). *How to Drug Proof Your Kids™ - Full Evaluation 2006 Report*. Institute of Health and Social Care Research, Peninsula Medical School.